



CHAPTER 8: PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND WATERWAYS

WORKING DRAFT (9/8/23)

This document is presented in its current form as a preliminary draft for informational purposes only. It is intended to provide an overview of the proposed content and the direction of the Comprehensive Plan. Please note that this draft is subject to further editing, revisions, and updates.

A public meeting is scheduled for September 23rd, during which community feedback will be solicited and considered. Following this meeting, the document will undergo additional refinement based on the input received. This refinement process may include the incorporation of photos, graphics, and other visual elements to enhance clarity and understanding.

As a result, the information contained in this draft may evolve, and new content may be added or modified to accurately reflect the goals, aspirations, and needs of the community. We encourage all stakeholders to provide comments, either in written form or at the Public Workshop, as your input will play a vital role in shaping the final version of the Comprehensive Plan.

We appreciate your understanding of the dynamic nature of this planning process and your active participation in creating a comprehensive plan that best serves the interests of our community.

8

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND WATERWAYS

Shelter Island's parks, open spaces, and waterways are not just physical entities; they embody the Island's essence, providing residents and visitors alike with places for reflection, exploration, and rejuvenation. These spaces are not just a luxury but an essential component of the Island's identity, contributing to the well-being of its inhabitants and the sustainability of its ecosystems.

This chapter discusses existing parks and open space resources and presents strategies to safeguard and enhance them for generations to come. It addresses the need to foster active lifestyles and community engagement by optimizing parks, sports facilities, and recreational spaces for all ages. It also recognizes the significance of how waterways are used and managed. The chapter outlines measures to ensure the continued use of waterways is done in a responsible way, which respects the environment and the safety and enjoyment for all users.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Planning is needed to ensure that parks and open space are appropriately maintained and that they are effectively utilized.

The Community Preservation Fund has been used to preserve lands, some of which are public recreation areas. Those funds are also used to maintain the properties. The CPF Advisory Board works with the Superintendent of Public Works in setting out a maintenance plan each year. What is missing is a link to the Recreation Department and its programming for passive recreational use of these properties.



More than a third of the Island is preserved open space

Mashomack Preserve, along with the conservation of other large parcels, has somewhat balanced Shelter Island's residential growth and preserved more than a third of the Island.



The waterways appear to be busier each year

This includes increasing numbers of day charter boats, for-hire water sports, jet ski traffic, and larger vessels with larger wakes. Planning is needed to accommodate and manage this increased activity. In order to ensure the safety of people and the health of the waterways, the Town should address the following:

- There has been an increased usage of anchorages. The Town may need to address this issue in order to maintain safe navigation and keep open water for recreational use.
- Boat landings need attention and maintenance according to the 2022 Shoreline Access Task Force Report.
- Other Town access points to the water need to be maintained.
- Mooring permits are limited to town residents and commercial marinas and some areas have waiting lists. Strategic planning is needed to delineate the capacity of existing mooring fields so that Shelter Island waters do not become overwhelmed with boats.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Seaplane traffic is a growing concern.

Restrictions on seaplane access in the Town of East Hampton in 2021 have reportedly resulted in increased arrivals of seaplanes on Shelter Island, with passengers calling a taxi to complete their journey across the South Ferry to the Hamptons. Residents have expressed concern about the safety and environmental impacts of seaplane operation.



PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Mid-century growth and change on Shelter Island inspired a conservation movement that continues to this day. Close to 2,600 acres of land and over 25 individual properties have been permanently protected or otherwise placed into an open space use that is unlikely to change. Figure X shows protected and publicly owned park and recreation areas in dark green. In beige are publicly owned properties classified by the Assessor as “vacant land.” Privately owned open space parcels that are unprotected shown in light green; this includes recreational land such as Gardiner’s Bay Country Club and a portion of the lands owned by the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm. It also includes the Mashomack Preserve, which is considered privately owned and protected as a matter of policy and is incorporated into the Town’s park system. The Preserve was created when the land was acquired by the Nature Conservancy in 1980, following the largest fundraising campaign in its history to that point, with over 1,700 contributors. Similarly, 105 acres of the 240-acre Sylvester Manor property has been permanently protected through a combination of donations from the family (owners since 1652), purchase of development rights by the Town and County, and funding from the Federal Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program. The entire Sylvester Manor property is now owned by the nonprofit Sylvester Manor Educational Farm and managed for conservation, historic preservation, agriculture, and education.

Conservation of many properties, including part of Sylvester Manor, has been supported by local funds raised through the Peconic Bay Region Community Preservation Fund (CPF). Established through a referendum in 1998, the CPF receives the revenue from a 2% transfer tax on real estate transactions occurring in East Hampton, Riverhead, Southold, Southampton, and Shelter Island, with each town receiving the tax from any transactions within its borders. The first \$400,000 of the purchase price is exempt from the tax. The funds raised may be used to protect open space, farmland, and historic structures. In 2016, another referendum was approved in all five towns that extends the CPF until 2050 and gives towns the option of investing up to 20% of CPF revenues in water quality projects such as septic system upgrades, while in 2022, another referendum was passed that adds 0.5% to the CPF transfer tax for housing initiatives. Shelter Island’s CPF revenue totaled \$1.13

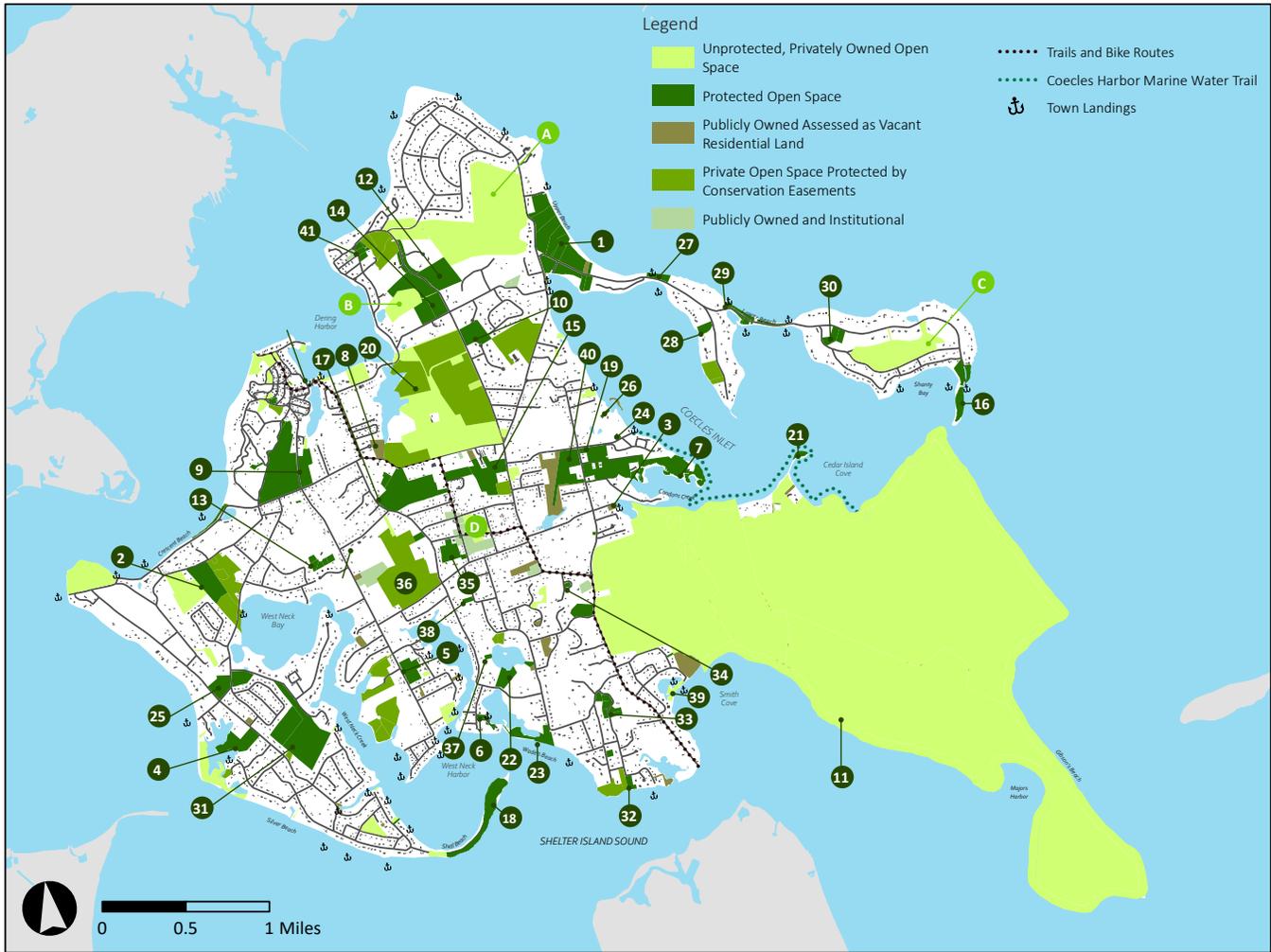
million in 2018, and increased to \$1.55 million in 2019, and \$3.08 million in 2020, peaking at \$5.08 million in 2021 before dropping to \$2.86 million for the 2022 year.

Protection of the Mashomack Preserve, along with conservation of other parcels such as the Community Preservation Fund purchases, has helped to counter-balance Shelter Island’s residential growth and preserved more than a third of the Island. The relatively low density required by the Island’s zoning, together with the complex shoreline of coves and inlets, has helped retain something of its historic rural character. But for much of the Island, the traditional rural landscape of farmsteads and hamlets surrounded by open space has evolved into more of a suburban landscape of roads lined by house lots and small open spaces surrounded by subdivisions.

Most of Shelter Island’s open space is preserved for passive recreational use, with a focus on trails and resources either on the water or with scenic water views. There are a number of walking paths and trails in the Mashomack Preserve, ranging from 1.5 miles to 11 miles, which are very popular. There is also a one-mile wheelchair accessible trail at Mashomack. Sylvester Manor is open from April through October for walking on three trails: the Woodland Walk, the Creekside Loop and the Farm Walk. Five of the Town preserves have walking trails: Bunker Hill County Park, Mildred Flower Hird Nature Preserve, Old Lima Bean Fields, Sachem’s Woods, and Turkem’s Rest Preserve.

Trails are built and maintained with the cooperation between the Town Highway Department, the Shelter Island Trail Club, and the Community Preservation Fund which holds regular trail clean ups and was involved in the preparation of the 2020-2021 Open Space & Preserved Lands Map. In addition, in 2019 they held trail cleanups on seven dates from April to June.

Active recreation is generally centered at the Community Center at the corner of School Street and Bateman Road. Fiske Field is located behind the center, offering baseball fields and basketball courts. In addition, the Shelter Island School has a baseball field and tennis/pickle ball courts. Using these courts often involves longish wait times. The Town’s Recreation Department offers a wide range of programming throughout the year including sports and exercise classes, special events, and concerts



#	Name		Name (or owner/manager)	#	Name (or owner/manager)
1	Bunker City County Park	16	Reel Point	31	Westmoreland Farms(Town/County)
2	Cackle Hill Preserve	17	Sachem's Woods	3-2	Shorewood (PLT/Shorewood Civic Association)
3	Congdon Creek Shorefront Preserve	18	Shell Beach	33	Osprey Rd (Town)
4	Crab Creek Preserve	19	St. Gabriel's Meadow	3,4	Willow Pond Park(Town)
5	Dickerson Pond Park	20	Sylvester Manor Educational Farm	3,5	Union Free School Playfields (PLT/UFS)
6	Dickerson Creek Overlook	21	Taylor's Island	36	RyanHorse Farm (PLT)
7	Foxen Point Tidal Wetlands	22	Turkem's Rest Preserve	37	Dickerson(PLT)
8	Gardiner's Creek Preserve	23	Wades Beach	3-8	Sunshine Road Park (PLT/Town)
9	Ice Pond Park	24	Wayside Park	3,9	Smith Cove-Underwater Land (NYS)
10	Locust Woods Preserve	25	West Neck Preserve	40	Klenawicus Airfield (Town CPF)
11	Mashomack Preserve	26	Cedar Island Overlook	41	Dering Harbor Village Lands
12	Mikfred Flower Hird Nature Preserve	27	PLT/County Conservation Land	A	Gardiner's Bay Country Club
13	North Menantic Preserve	28	PLT/Nature Conservancy	B	Catholic Church Cemetery
14	Old Lima Bean Fields	29	Lower Beach (PLT/County/Town)	C	Ram Island County Park(Osprey Acres)
15	Old Nursery Woodlands Preserve	30	PLT/Town	D	Shelter Island Cemetery

FIGURE 12: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, 2020-2021 Shelter Island Open Space and Preserved Land Map, and Microsoft Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

for all ages. In addition, the department operates Project Fit, a membership gym, behind the school and it has been noted that the presence of a public gym attached to the school poses logistical problems for school safety.

The library has offered some recreational programming as well over the years such as Essentrics Movement classes as well as meditation session and hobby clubs for knitters or Mah Jong enthusiasts.



WATERWAYS

Shelter Island's waterways are frequented by recreational boaters/sailors, commercial and recreational fisherman, water taxis, launches, charter boats, and paddlers of all stripes. Each of these users are an integral part of Shelter Island's economy and identity. Shelter Island also has a variety of groups which help to manage the waterways and ensure that activities are conducted in a safe and environmentally friendly manner:

- Harbor Masters: Patrol local waters to enforce federal, state, and local ordinances, preserve the peace, protect life and perform other related work as members of the Shelter Island Police Department.
- Conservation Advisory Council (CAC): Established to advise in the development, management and protection of the Town's natural resources. The CAC provides advice and technical support on such matters as proposals affecting change to: salt and fresh water wetlands, the Island's aquifer and woodlands, use of major parcels of open space and management of Town lands. The CAC also has responsibility for recommending properties for inclusion in the Shelter Island Nature Preserve and developing land management plans for parcels included in the system.
- Waterways Management Advisory Council (WMAC): The WMAC was established to advise the town board on issues relating to the following:
 1. Town services and facilities, such as town landings, town docks, bathing facilities, navigation aids and signs, fire department waterway concerns, dredging, police and Harbor Master reports.
 2. Waterways usage such as private and commercial mooring regulations, commercial and private dock regulations, mooring, dock, bulkhead, and groin applications, area usage such as mooring fields, anchorages, and preserved spaces.
 3. Water quality in the waterways, environmental emergency procedures, upland source pollution, beach erosion, environmental

education, Peconic Estuary Program, and overboard discharge and pump out facility matters.

- Water Advisory Committee (WAC): WAC mission is to ensure adequate drinking water for the Shelter Island Community. This is accomplished by advising the Town Board on appropriate actions/regulations, utilizing the best available science to evaluate quality and quantity of available drinking water, educate the community about water conservation and identifying and utilizing best practices to help manage drinking water.
- Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB): Was created to oversee the distribution of Community Preservation Funds collected for the purpose of water quality improvements. Their mission is to review applications for water quality improvement projects and make recommendations for funding to the Town Board. Some of their projects include the Septic Improvement Grant program, funding for Fresh Pond remediation project, and funding water testing initiatives in the center of town.

The Harbor Masters, responsible for keeping the waterways safe, reported an average of 173 calls per year from 2011-2021. While the graph above shows written/documented calls, the Harbor Masters provide many other services that frequently go undocumented during daily operations, according to the Police Chief.

In the Fall of 2021, the Harbor Masters reported to the Waterways Management Advisory Committee (WMAC), the following identified trends that have potential to affect long-term quality-of-life on the water:

- Increasing numbers of day charter boats hailing from Sag Harbor and elsewhere making day trips to Coecles Harbor, West Neck, and Crescent Beach
- An increase in for-hire water sports in Smith's Cove and off Crescent Beach adding to waterways congestion.
- Increased usage of the Coecles Harbor and West Neck anchorages
- Larger vessels with greater horsepower using inside waters, which can mean higher speeds and larger wakes.

- Increased jet ski traffic, which has water safety and noise impacts.

Air and Seaplane Access

Though not heavily used, the Island accommodates small aircraft at the town-owned Klenawicus Airfield, a 1700-foot grass landing strip. The field was acquired by the Town in 2010 and is maintained by the Shelter Island Pilots' Association.

Two or three companies provide seaplane service to Shelter Island from New York City. Thus far, seaplanes have arrived at and departed from Crescent Beach. In 2021, the Town of East Hampton prohibited seaplanes from landing, taxiing, mooring, taking on or discharging passengers at town beaches and waterways as well as trustee waters, beaches, and docks. Southampton prohibits takeoffs and landings within 1000 feet of the shore, while Southold prevents taxiing, landing, and takeoffs in all town waters. These neighboring towns restrictions have reportedly resulted in increased arrivals of seaplanes on Shelter Island, with passengers calling a taxi to complete their journey across the South Ferry to the Hamptons.

BOAT LANDINGS AND SHORELINE ACCESS POINTS

The Shoreline Access Task Force, an ad hoc Town committee, issued a report to the Town Board in 2022 which provided a survey of Town landings and shoreline access points. They identified 70 Town-owned shore points included 8 beaches, 14 ramps where boats can be launched, and 46 landings. These numbers, of course, will change over time as new waterfront lands are acquired by the Town.

Shoreline Access Points

The Town has issued approximately 800 mooring permits and recognizes the possibility of limiting future mooring permits in order to maintain safe navigation and keep open water for recreational use. Mooring permits are limited to Town residents and commercial marinas, and some areas have waiting lists. Non-residents can obtain moorings through the commercial marinas. Waterfront landowners are allowed one riparian mooring.

Town-owned docks at Congdon's Creek and Dering Harbor are regulated according to the Dock Law, Chapter 53 of the Town Code, which regulates commercial and private docks as well as Town-owned docks and underwater lands. The law requires an annual permit from the Town Clerk and describes allowable uses, seasons and other issues regarding the town facilities.

For commercial and private docks, the law regulates design and construction and establishes a review and permitting procedure. Design standards control the length, width, and depth of docks.

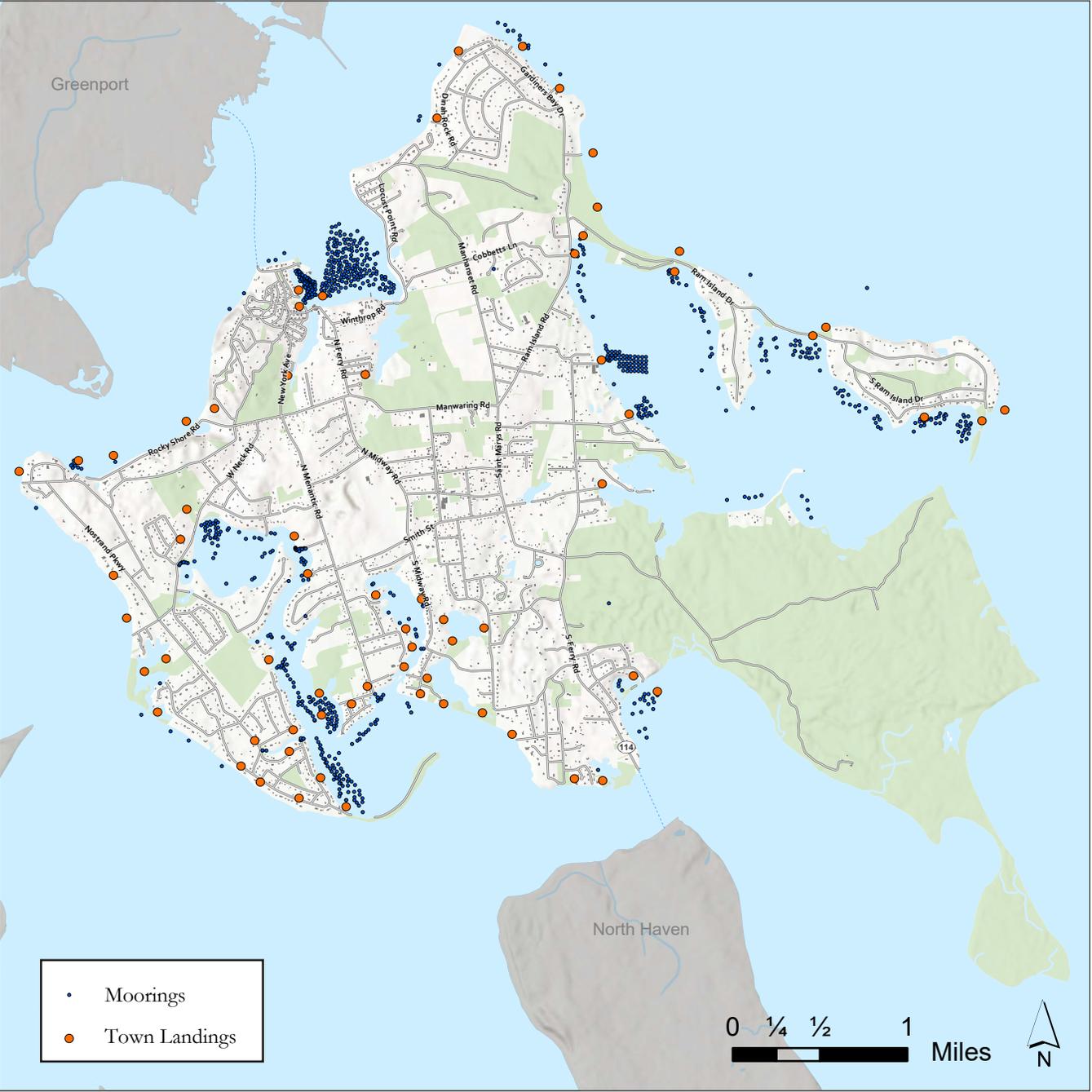


FIGURE 13: MOORINGS AND TOWN LANDINGS

Source: Town of Shelter Island

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal 8-1: Comprehensively plan for use and protection of waterfront and waterways

Develop a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP)

A Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) is a comprehensive plan designed to guide the sustainable development, conservation, and enhancement of waterfront areas, including both coastal and inland waterways. Creating an LWRP can allow the Town to have more authority over use of its waterfront areas. It establishes a long-term partnership among local governments, community-based organizations, and the State. State actions must be consistent with an approved LWRP. This process would include the establishment of policies regulating the use of waterways. Many of these policy considerations are discussed in subsequent recommendations below.

Developing an LWRP involves engaging with local communities, stakeholders, and experts. This collaborative approach allows residents to participate in shaping the future of their waterfront areas. Having an LWRP in place can help municipalities remain eligible for various financial assistance opportunities. Some state and federal programs prefer communities to have an approved LWRP to access certain grants and funding for waterfront-related projects.

Develop a Plan for Moorings

Consider Grid Fields. The total number of moorings has remained fairly constant over the past several years. However, the increasing Island population and national statistics regarding the significantly higher number of boats being purchased would indicate that demand for moorings (and docks) will increase in this boating community. The Waterways Management Advisory Council (WMAC) should be tasked with delineating boundaries for the existing mooring fields. This work should be done in consultation with baymen, aquaculturists, marinas, and the public. Once the areas are identified, the second task would be to determine how

many moorings would be gained by utilizing a grid layout. Grid moorings maximize the use of available space, allowing more boats or vessels to be accommodated within a given area. This can be particularly beneficial in busy marinas or harbors where there is a high demand for mooring spots. The grids would have a graduated layout with small boats near the shore and larger boats offshore. It may be possible to build a grid over time on the established mooring fields using Online Moorings and GIS to shift coordinates as people renew or apply for new moorings. With annual renewals, there are more opportunities to make this shift.

It is also possible that the WMAC and Town Board may determine that the best course of action will be to not establish grids but to limit each mooring field to a maximum boundary. Overlaying a grid on an existing mooring field would be costly because it would necessitate moving the existing moorings into the grid boxes. Further, there is the question of who would pay to move the moorings – the Town or the mooring holder.

Limit boat size on all moorings. Consider where it may be appropriate to limit boat sizes (both length and height) which can impede vistas and site lines. Safety is a particular issue for difficult-to-see recreational users such as swimmers, kayakers, and paddle-boarders. Areas to delineate for limited boat size should be studied by the Waterways Management Advisory Council, and recommendations should be presented to the Town Board.

Consider alternate pricing programs. As the Town reaches the limits of mooring space, the idea of modifying fees to be based on the space they utilize should be explored. This idea has been considered before but never implemented largely because of potential administrative difficulties. However, given the increasingly automated process with Online Moorings, it has become easier to reduce the cost and effort to allocate scarce harbor resources.

Limiting additional mooring fields. If our existing mooring fields should reach build out, Shelter Island should not open additional mooring fields for environmental, aesthetic, and conflict of use reasons. The possible exception to this may be to accommodate larger boats in Smith Cove. As one Bayman said at a Town Board Work Session, we do not want the entire island to be a marina. Marine life as well as other recreational uses will benefit if the waters remain open and not increasingly congested with additional mooring fields and transient anchorages. If mooring field capacity is reached, consider limiting residences to 1 or 2 moorings instead of 3.

Stake Mooring Pulley (SMP). These types of moorings do impact the health of the tidal areas simply by boaters walking across and damaging marsh grasses to access their boats. The Waterways Management Advisory Council (WMAC) could be tasked with creating a map of the shoreline which identifies the types of grasses and other points of ecological interest. This map could be used to delineate acceptable SMP areas. Although the WMAC has previously established areas that are acceptable for SMP installations, these areas should be formalized in consultation with the baymen and perhaps Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or Peconic Estuary Program. Areas that are not acceptable should also be signed. Limits should consider boat size, boat width, and depth. No boats should rest on the bottom at low tide.

Mooring Gear: Consider mandating less destructive mooring gear - known as conservation moorings. The WMAC, in consultation with the baymen and Cornell Cooperative Extension, should investigate this issue and make recommendations to the Town Board.

Anchorage. The Town should consider whether the anchorages in West Neck and Coecles Harbor should become Town managed mooring fields in order to reduce the negative impact of anchors on the bottom. This practice is common in many other municipalities. However, there are numerous considerations such as who owns and maintains the ground tackle and who manages the day-to-day operations of the fields.

One aesthetic consideration is that the mooring fields would not be clear when transients are not present. If the Town wished to explore this possibility, a business plan would be necessary to establish whether the expected revenue from the Town renting out transient moorings would cover the expense of maintaining the tackle and the costs involved in collecting that revenue

In the absence of Town-run mooring fields, the size of the transient anchorages should be limited to the current (2023) size and defined on a map. To better control and manage transient anchorages, the marker buoys and Town website should make it clear that there are fines for anchoring outside of the marked area. Fines should be substantial and several times what other towns typically charge for overnight moorings, which can be up to \$80/night or at least the cost of an overnight mooring at an Island marina.

Goal 8-2: Continue to work with the County, other towns, and groups to maintain navigable channels to ensure safe passage, preserve vistas, sustain marine life, and enable recreational use.

Continue dredging projects where needed.

Dredging is a difficult issue. In many cases, accretion is the result of tidal and wave action, and in others it is the result of flora and fauna dying off due to lack of oxygen and filling in the body of water. That can be the result of flow in/out being reduced, nutrient overload (septic issues, runoff, etc.) or both. If the underlying causes

are not addressed, it will occur again and again. The Waterways Management Advisory Committee and the Water Advisory Committee are monitoring the health of various bodies of water.

Dredging is a difficult process, difficult because of the cost involved and the permitting and oversight from regulatory and County agencies. These regulations are in place to protect habitats for fish, birds, and other

wildlife. The regulations also ensure that dredging spoils are disposed of properly. Any new proposals for Town dredging by the County must also go through a lengthy screening process and meet their specific criteria for consideration.

Town should investigate the economics and risk profile of entering a cooperative agreement with neighboring town(s) to share the costs and management of local dredging because the County dredges for the sole purpose of keeping navigational channels open, but the Town has an interest in increasing the rate that water bodies are flushed which is also an important outcome of dredging.

The Shelter Island Department of Public Works has been strongly committed to maintaining navigable channels, and continues to work closely with Town officials, the WMAC, and the Highway Department. A list of revolving dredge projects for Shelter Island follows:

- Coecles Inlet: dredged in late 2022
- Merkel Boat Basin Inlet dredge in late 2021
- Silver Beach Lagoon: dredged 11/2013, was permitted through 8/2018
- West Neck Harbor Entrance: dredged in 2013, 2017, and likely again in 2023-2024
- Dickerson Creek Entrance: dredged in 2013, 2017, and permitted through 1/2023
- Menantic Creek: permitted through 1/2021, SCDPW is currently applying for an increased depth modification for Menantic entrance & West Neck entrance.
- The Town might consider a private contractor for the “choke point” in Menantic Creek beyond where the County will dredge to assist in flushing that creek.
- South Ferry: dredged 2016 under a 10-year permit.

Areas that have been privately dredged include Mabel’s Creek, Crab Creek, Merkel Basin, South Ferry slips, Hay Beach Creek (Town) and a basin on the northeast side of Little Ram Island.

Protect Reel Point and Shell Beach.

These “spits” or narrow peninsulas are threatened with breaching when storms roll in; the loss of either one would lead to extensive property loss in the respective harbors that they protect. The Town Board, through the efforts of Councilman Jim Colligan have been lobbying the Army Corps of Engineers to protect Reel Point. Although progress has been made, this effort needs to be continued and perhaps expanded to include Shell Beach.

Shell Beach, it must be noted, was an island up until the late 1900’s; the end was reachable only by boat or by walking at low tide. This configuration was thought to have encouraged flushing of the West Neck Bay area and Menantic Creek. The Town should explore the concept of opening up a canal or installing a culvert across the Shell Beach peninsula to increase the flushing of West Neck marine system.

Prohibit excessive power boat wakes with code regulations and signage buoys

There have been complaints of large, multiple engine boats pulling skiers or tubes causing large wakes in West Neck Harbor & West Neck Bay. This can be harrowing for dock owners and human powered craft. There has to be a balance among users.

There may be some compromises that would permit the continuation of towing sports within the harbors and bays of the Town. Certain activities create much larger wakes than others, with waterskiing creating the smallest and wake surfing (where a water bladder in the boat is filled in order to sink the stern lower and create a surfable wake) creating the largest. “Tubing” is also an issue since the goal appears to be launching the tuber off the largest wake possible. The sizes of boats used for these activities have grown, as have the resulting wakes. Therefore, perhaps limiting the number of engines alone will not solve the problem unless it is also coupled with a prohibition on inside waters of the sorts of activities that require the largest wakes.

When and if damage from wakes in specific areas becomes untenable as noted by the Harbor Masters, waterfront property owners or the WMAC, speed limits and no wake zones may become necessary. Furthermore, since the primary issue seems to be large wakes, regulating the

size of the boat together with operational displacement (i.e., include ski boats permanently designed to sit low or use water bladders) would perhaps best match this concern.

Explore acquisition of a pump-out boat to service the anchorages and mooring fields throughout the summer.

In coordination with the Peconic Baykeeper and the Surfrider Foundation, the Harbor Master is conducting weekly tests for fecal bacteria of the anchorages in Coecles Harbor, West Neck Bay, and Dering Harbor beginning in the summer of 2023. Other water bodies should be added when possible. The testing is for enterococcus and would inform the Town's decision to investigate, obtain, and operate a pump-out boat. Direct overboard discharge of sewage in coastal waters has been illegal since 1972; boats with heads will have a holding tank of some kind designed in or retrofitted but these tanks, especially on older boats, tend to be undersized. As boaters know, once anchored for an evening or a weekend, boaters are reluctant to pull anchor and head to a land-based pump-out to the detriment of the harbor. A pump-out boat counteracts this tendency.

Consider limiting seaplane activity

Once a seaplane lands, it is a boat and thus a concern for the waterways of Shelter Island. Seaplanes have been seen regularly using Coecles Harbor and Crescent Beach. Seaplanes taking off in Coecles Harbor exceed the 45-mph speed limit while on the water, which should be enforced by the Town. Seaplane activity appears to be increasing, both by private residents and by commercial operators providing access between New York City and the Island. In fact, in 2022 there was a proposal to anchor a barge out in Gardiners Bay for helicopter landings to be serviced by a water taxi shuttle service. This plan was ultimately abandoned by its proponent, but the concept may well be put forth again.

The impact on the quality-of-life and the safety of the waterways of these activities is sure to grow as the demographics of the Island continue to shift. The Town Board should examine this issue, perhaps by tasking the WMAC or by hiring an outside consultant to determine the appropriate limits on this traffic. This issue could also

be explored as part of a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan process. Limits that could be explored include: Limiting commercial operators to daily takeoffs/landings; a prohibition on landing/takeoff on inside waters, and extension of the 500-foot Town control of the bottom in order to prevent the anchoring of a barge.

In a related matter, helicopters have been seen taking off from yachts anchored off of Crescent Beach. As a matter of public health and safety, the Town should require that helicopters only land or take off from boats that are at least 1,500 feet offshore.

Create a Marine Business Zone

Under current zoning, five waterfront areas are zoned business: Hudson Avenue (Coecles Harbor Marina), South Menantic Road (Island Boat Yard), Congdon Road (Town Dock), Cartwright Road (Clarks Marina), and Bridge Street. Under current zoning, these properties can be converted to any other business use listed in the B zoning district. There are also established standards for boat yard/marinas which are not incorporated into the B zone.

It may be appropriate to create a marine business zone to support marine-related businesses which require special considerations (i.e., being in environmentally sensitive areas). The zone might consider which businesses and the scale of which would not be appropriate in such a district.

Consider policy for establishment of new docks

While the assessment roll has 366 docks, a 2023 count by aerial found 426 docks. There are currently 48 vacant and potentially buildable (greater than 0.5 acres) waterfront parcels, indicating that, at the very minimum, buildout is perhaps 48 additional docks (an increase of about 10%) on land that is currently completely vacant. Furthermore, there are a total of 846 waterfront parcels, half of which currently have docks; therefore, potentially hundreds more docks are theoretically possible.

In dock application reviews by the WMAC during 2022-23 meetings, the following issues were explored:

- Does the Town have a right and/or should the Town prioritize “pristine” shorelines even though the property owners may wish to have a dock? In addition, there are areas where docks simply should not be built due to existing environmental conditions which are predicted to become more extreme, environmental protection reasons, aesthetic issues, navigation issues, etc. If areas where docks cannot/should not be built were codified, that may have an impact on property values.
- Should the Town limit the size of boats allowed to dock at private and commercial docks? For example, properties high on a bluff where the presence of a larger vessel would not impact a neighbor’s view may be permitted a larger boat vs. those properties at sea level where a large boat would negatively impact views.
- Establish a database for docks. Online Moorings would be an efficient vehicle for this database. Reconcile and address the discrepancy noted above between permitted docks and imagery-based counts. Dock applications & permits should be filed according to SBL property tax number not applicant name as is currently the case.
- Town Docks. Consider locations for new municipal docks. There are many considerations necessary to ensure that this is revenue producing, properly managed, and self-supporting.

Consider policies on boatlifts and boat paint

WMAC policy has been to not allow boatlifts on inside waters, but this has not been codified. In outside waters, boatlifts have been permitted up to 8,000 lbs. Thus far, the WMAC has not recommended codifying this, there may be parcels where boat lifts may be needed and don’t interrupt a neighbor’s view. This question – of whether or not to codify the permitting of boat lifts – should be further examined by the WMAC and a recommendation delivered to the Town Board.

Bottom paint choice is not mandated by any regulations, but they are thought to have an impact on the marine environment. The WMAC should develop an educational campaign to help boat owners make better decisions for boat bottom paint to reduce paint leaching when boats are lifted out of the water. New, silicone-based bottom

paints contain no biocides (such as copper) and therefore do not pollute the marine environment. Further study and consideration of bottom paint by the WMAC is warranted, however, it is recognized that enforcement of paint choice would be hard without state or federal regulations on paint.

Consider policies on bulkheads

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) discourages-hardening of shorelines but is not expressly prohibiting bulkheads or revetments when property loss is imminent or substantial. The WMAC has not seen many applications for new bulkheads since Hurricane Sandy. The DEC has not looked favorably on new applications, but the DEC and the WMAC made exceptions for several properties where houses were compromised by Hurricane Sandy. The surrounding properties all had bulkheads, and the properties that didn’t were severely eroded. They now have bulkheads that were approved by all agencies.

The DEC, WMAC, and Town Board have been supportive of in-kind replacements of bulkheads, which tend to deteriorate over time. Measures to mitigate that effect and at the same time lengthen the life of the bulkhead, should be required for new construction. Public access stairways should be required along with a public right-of-way on or beside the bulkhead, where necessary, to preserve a facsimile of the public’s right to walk the beach below mean high tide where no beach remains.

Consider expansion of programs that support aquaculture such as the restocking of shellfish.

Efforts to re-introduce both hard clams and scallops have been conducted at The Nature Conservancy and several sites in Town waters. An oyster program has been sponsored by the Cornell facility in Southold, and Island residents have participated as individuals. The Peconic Estuary Program and Cornell have also attempted to reseed eelgrass beds in Island waters with marginal success. Limited commercial production of oysters has begun on Town bottoms. Some opportunities to consider include the following:

- The Town should pursue grants for additional funding for renewing shellfish beds. Establishing an LWRP could help in this effort.
- Assign responsibility for monitoring shell fishing, off-bottom aquaculture, and transplant approaches to one committee or person to keep the Town abreast of opportunities.
- Consider leasing underwater Town, County, State, or private bottoms for aquaculture.
- Support continued efforts at habitat restoration, which may be an essential component for long-term success of reestablishing sustainable populations.
- Discuss with local baymen the viability of a specialized marketing program for “Shelter Island label” products.

The Town should also consider areas where aquaculture should be protected and controlled, especially on inside waters. There are expansive areas in outside waters, where unchecked expansion of aquaculture endeavors could create, primarily with.

Identify habitat restoration measures.

Eelgrass beds, wetlands and shallows serve a nursery function for fish and shellfish, helping support a healthy ecosystem. The WMAC should lead in identifying problems and solutions for the coastal habitat. As the mooring permitting process and management is gradually taken over by the Harbor Master, WMAC will have an increased ability to take on these vital topics. The Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB) and the Water Advisory Committee (WAC) should also be tasked to work in conjunction with the WMAC to achieve the goal of habitat restoration.

Prepare a comprehensive inventory and evaluation of shoreline access points and Town landings, whether used or fallow; formulate a program to assure that they remain open for that purpose and upgrade them where necessary.

A survey of Town-owned shoreline access points was completed by the ad hoc Shoreline Access Task Force in early 2022. The DPW has an inventory that is directed towards conditions and maintenance plans. Periodic review and management of this topic should be under the remit of the WMAC. Shoreline access is congruent with the question of where stake and mooring pullies (SMPs) should and shouldn't go as well as with possible additional Town Dock locations.

The availability of usable and readily accessible Town landings reduces the need for docks for smaller boats, kayaks, and canoes. The Highway Department has inventoried Town landings, including location, type of structure, condition, estimated remaining life, thereby compiling a ranking system for maintenance. However, this list is not regularly maintained on the control sheet, and priorities seem uncertain. Some planning considerations for landings are as follows:

- There is limited parking at almost all landings. However, except for Fresh Pond, usage does not seem to require expansion of parking areas.
- Certain landings are difficult to use with steep slopes or rocky ground and not maintained. As such they represent a danger to the public, which needs to be addressed.
- Maintenance of Town landings is variable, with erosion and plant invasion at some sites.
- Most of the Town shoreline is passable with certain exceptions, generally caused where bulkheads have been installed and subsequent erosion of the beach has occurred.

It is recommended that the Town Landings list be updated and maintained on, at least, an annual basis. The Town should also develop a maintenance plan which lists action items by priority. Upgrade plans should include “Public Landing” signage at all landings.

Provide resources to the CAC and WMAC for community education and communication, both for residents and visitors

Continuing education of aquifer and other resource issues is vital to Shelter Island as the Town has limited enforcement resources and the population is always changing. Over the past 10 years, the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC), the Nature Conservancy, Peconic Land Trust, Group for the East End, the Peconic Bay keeper and the Peconic Estuary Program and other environmental groups have produced a variety of educational documents. The Town should renew efforts to ensure that all relevant education materials are posted on the Town’s website and that they are periodically updated as appropriate. The Town, CAC, and other groups should also work with community partners to distribute pamphlets at locations aside from Town Hall.

Review use of beaches by off road vehicles to protect the beach environment

In areas where natural resources are threatened, recreational riding on beaches should be discouraged. Consideration should be given to allow access for fishermen.

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